

**POS 4734: Research Methods**  
**Fall Semester 2020**  
**MWF 10:40-11:30 AM**  
**(Synchronous Instruction)**

Instructor: Nicholas Kerr, Ph.D.  
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Virtual Office Hours: 12:30-2:00 Monday & Wednesday  
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*Course Description:*

This course introduces students to a variety of methodological approaches and techniques political scientists utilize when studying political phenomena. The course is divided into three main sections. *Section 1* focuses on the ‘scientific’ nature of political inquiry and highlights several phases of the research design process: research question formulation, theory development, conceptualization and measurement. *Section 2* explores the fundamentals of collecting empirical data using experimental and observational (qualitative and quantitative) techniques. *Section 3* introduces several statistical and qualitative methods for making descriptive and causal inferences. This includes learning how to use Stata (a widely-utilized statistical software package) to perform basic statistical analyses. The course is particularly geared towards students who plan to write a senior thesis as it exposes students several phases of the research process and gives students the opportunity to develop a research proposal based on a topic relevant to one of the main sub-fields in political science.

*Required Texts:*

- Johnson, J.B., Reynolds, H.T. and Mycoff, J.D., 2019. *Political Science Research Methods*. Cq Press. (Available at bookstore: 9<sup>th</sup> Edition)
- Acock, A.C., 2008. *A Gentle Introduction to Stata*. Stata press. (Available at bookstore: 6<sup>th</sup> Edition)

*Additional Readings:*

- Throughout the semester, I have assigned readings from journal articles and book chapters which will be available electronically through Canvas.

*Required Software:*

- Students will learn how to use Stata to carryout basic statistical analysis. Stata is available:
  - In the [UF Apps package](#) (Free and compatible with Windows, Mac or tablet)
  - Student versions can also be purchased with a 6-month license (<https://www.stata.com/order/new/edu/gradplans/student-pricing/>)

*Instructional Requirements:*

- Students will be required to have access and use a personal computer with the access to the Internet.
- This course is facilitated 100% online through Canvas. You may access Canvas from UF’s e-Learning webpage: <https://elearning.ufl.edu/>. Please contact the UF Help Desk, <https://helpdesk.ufl.edu/>, if you have any technical difficulties with Canvas.

*Canvas Course Website:*

Canvas will serve as a repository for course materials, this includes:

- Updated copies of the syllabus;
- Assigned readings not contained in required texts;
- Additional reading list;
- Internet and electronic resources on research methods;
- Midterm and final exam study guides and research proposal guidelines.
- Log in at <https://elearning.ufl.edu/>

*Course Requirements and Assignments:*

- Attendance, Participation & Methods Lab Assignments (10%)
  - Online attendance for this course is mandatory and an attendance record will be taken for every class. Students are expected to come to class having done the reading and ready to contribute to class discussions.
  - **6 Methods Labs** (& 1 Take-Home assignment) will be held during the semester on Fridays. Each lab session includes an assignment that should be started in the lab and completed the **Wednesday of the following week**. Students are able to work with other students in completing the assignments, however, each student should submit their own assignment through Turnitin on Canvas.
- Midterm Exam (30%):
  - Part I (15%): Will be held online during the course period on **Monday, October 19**. A review for the Midterm will be online during the course period on **Wednesday, October 21**
  - Part II (15%): Will be distributed by email on **Wednesday, October 21** and due through Turnitin on Canvas by **11:59PM Sunday, October 25**.
- Final Exam (20%): The final will be held online during Final Exam Period on **Friday, December 18: 7:30-9:30AM**. A review for the Final will be held online during the course period on **Wednesday, December 9**.
- Final Research Proposal Assignments (40%)
  - Final Proposal (25%): Students will develop a well-formulated research proposal that demonstrates a promising research agenda that can be pursued after the class (i.e. as an honors thesis). The Research Proposal is due on Wednesday, December **16** at 4 pm through Turnitin on Canvas. In your research proposal, you should
    - State your question of inquiry. (What is the puzzle that you would like to solve?)
    - Review the current literature, and explain why, despite the state of the art, there is still something that needs to be done. (Why is your question interesting? What is your contribution?) Alternatively, you can identify (and seek to solve) an empirical puzzle that no one has ever successfully explained.
    - Propose your theory, elaborate the logic underneath it, and restate your proposition in a falsifiable form. (What is your solution?)
    - Discuss how you plan to empirically test your theory (using appropriate methodological approaches).

- Conduct preliminary empirical analyses (using appropriate methodological approaches).
- Draft Proposal (10%): Students will complete a draft of the proposal. The draft proposal should be two pages doubled space, including a select bibliography of potential sources. An electronic copy of the draft proposal is due on **Monday, November 30** at 4pm submitted through TURNITIN on Canvas. Further and detailed instructions for the Research Proposal and Draft of Research Proposal will be provided.
- 5-minute Research Presentation (5%): Students will conduct a brief presentation of their Research Proposal to the class on **Friday, December 4 & Monday, December 7**. Further and detailed instructions for the presentations will be provided.

*Grading Scale:*

Each grade that you earn for assignments will be based on the weightings indicated above. Your final grade will be converted based on the following scale:

A: 93-100		A-: 90-92
B+: 87-89	B: 83-86	B-: 80-82
C+: 77-79	C: 73-76	C-: 70-72
D+: 67-69	D: 63-66	D-: 60-62
F: 59 and below		

*Policies on Course Readings, Attendance, Cell Phones & Computers*

- This is course will be delivered using synchronous instruction which means that students are expected to participate in the course during each 50-minute period Mondays through Fridays.
- Attendance for this course is mandatory and an attendance record will be taken every class. Students are expected to come to class having done the reading and ready to contribute to class discussions. If students are routinely absent—or attend without doing the proper preparation—they will not receive full credit for participation. Students who miss more than **three** classes without a formal excuse may receive additional reductions to their overall grade.
- All readings should be completed by the assigned class period. The reading load varies throughout the semester, but you should expect to read at least one source for each class. For some class sessions, I have assigned multiple readings. Please do not be alarmed. I will provide instructions on how to prepare for these class sessions. **Importantly, I reserve the right to change the course readings or course structure during the semester as I see fit. Any changes will be updated on the syllabus and uploaded to Canvas.**
- Cell phones should be placed on silent during class sessions and activities such as browsing and texting should be kept to an absolute minimum.
- Students are allowed to use computers for course-related purposes, including taking notes, reviewing assigned readings, and completing class assignments.

*Policies on Cheating and Plagiarism:*

- UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.”

- The Honor Code (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honorcode/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor.

*Policies on Late Assignments, Make-up Exams, & Contact:*

- Assignment extensions will only be offered under extenuating circumstances. Late assignments submitted without a valid extension will be penalized as per my discretion.
- Make-up exams will only be arranged for *university-accepted excuses*.
- When contacting me by email please utilize standard grammar and punctuation. In most instances, I will respond to emails within 24 hours.

*Policies for Persons with Disabilities:*

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, [www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/](http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/)) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

A student with an increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19, as determined by the [CDC](https://www.cdc.gov/), can register with the Disability Resource Center to request a temporary course modification and/or academic accommodation. The student will need to provide medical documentation that identifies their diagnosis and their medical provider's concerns related to possible COVID-19 exposure. Students should be mindful that remote course access is not always a feasible modification for every course. The DRC will work in partnership with the student's instructor to determine a reasonable modification that meets the course requirements while considering the student's concerns for exposure. Students can begin the process to register with the DRC by completing the form located on the [DRC website](#). For questions, please contact the DRC at 352-392-8565 or [drc@ufsa.ufl.edu](mailto:drc@ufsa.ufl.edu)

*Course Evaluations:*

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/>.

*Policies of Recorded Lectures:*

Our class sessions may be audio visually recorded for students in the class to refer back and for enrolled students who are unable to attend live. Students who participate with their camera engaged or utilize a profile image are agreeing to have their video or image recorded. If you are unwilling to consent to have your profile or video image recorded, be sure to keep your camera off and do not use a profile image. Likewise, students who un-mute during class and participate orally are agreeing to have their voices recorded. If you are not willing to consent to have your voice recorded during class, you will need to keep your mute button activated and communicate exclusively using the "chat" feature, which allows students to type questions and comments live.

The chat will not be recorded or shared. As in all courses, unauthorized recording and unauthorized sharing of recorded materials is prohibited.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Section</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Readings</b>
Monday, August 31, 2020	Intro & Overview I	Course Overview	No assigned readings
Wednesday, September 2, 2020	Foundations of Political Inquiry	Introduction	J&R 1-2
Friday, September 4, 2020	Foundations of Political Inquiry	Literature Review	J& R 3
<b>Monday, September 7, 2020</b>	<b>LABOR DAY: No Class</b>		
Wednesday, September 9, 2020	Foundations of Political Inquiry	Hypotheses & Conceptualization	J&R 4
Friday, September 11, 2020	LAB # INTRO		TBD
Monday, September 14, 2020	Foundations of Political Inquiry	Measurement	J&R 4
Wednesday, September 16, 2020	Research Design	RD Introduction	J&R 6
Friday, September 18, 2020	LAB #1		J&R 11
Monday, September 21, 2020	Research Design	Sampling I	J&R 5
Wednesday, September 23, 2020	Research Design	Sampling II	J&R 5
Friday, September 25, 2020	LAB #2		TBD
Monday, September 28, 2020	Research Design	Qualitative Designs I	J&R 7
Wednesday, September 30, 2020	Research Design	Qualitative Designs II	J&R 8
Friday, October 2, 2020	LAB #3		TBD
Monday, October 5, 2020	Research Design	Experimental Designs I	J&R 9
Wednesday, October 7, 2020	Research Design	Experimental Designs II	J&R 9
Friday, October 9, 2020	LAB #4		TBD
Monday, October 12, 2020	Research Design	Cross-Sectional Designs I	J&R 9
Wednesday, October 14, 2020	Research Design	Cross-Sectional Designs II	J&R 10
Friday, October 16, 2020	Research Design	Cross-Sectional Designs III	J&R 10
Monday, October 19, 2020	Midterm Review	Midterm Review	N/A
Wednesday, October 21, 2020	Midterm	Midterm	N/A
Friday, October 23, 2020	Take home midterm	Take home midterm	N/A
Monday, October 26, 2020	Political Analysis	Descriptive Statistics	J&R 11
Wednesday, October 28, 2020	Political Analysis	Descriptive Statistics	J&R 11
Friday, October 30, 2020	Foundations: LAB #5		TBD
Monday, November 2, 2020	Political Analysis	Statistical Inference & Hypotheses Testing I	J&R 12
Wednesday, November 4, 2020	Political Analysis	Statistical Inference & Hypotheses Testing II	J&R 12
Friday, November 6, 2020	Foundations: LAB #6		TBD
Monday, November 9, 2020	Political Analysis	Bivariate Relationships I	J&R 13
<b>Wednesday, November 11, 2020</b>	<b>VETERANS DAY</b>		
Friday, November 13, 2020	Political Analysis	Bivariate Relationships II	J&R 13
Monday, November 16, 2020	Political Analysis	Regression Analysis I	J&R 14
Wednesday, November 18, 2020	Political Analysis	Regression Analysis II	J&R 14
Friday, November 20, 2020	Foundations: LAB #7		TBD
Monday, November 23, 2020	Political Analysis	Regression Analysis III	J&R 14
<b>Wednesday, November 25, 2020</b>	<b>THANKSGIVING</b>		
<b>Friday, November 27, 2020</b>	<b>THANKSGIVING</b>		
Monday, November 30, 2020	Final Paper Tutorial	Final-Paper Tutorial	Review J&R 2-4

Wednesday, December 2, 2020	Final Paper Tutorial	Final-Paper Tutorial
Friday, December 4, 2020	Final Paper Tutorial	Student Presentations
Monday, December 7, 2020	Student Presentations	Student Presentations
Wednesday, December 9, 2020	Final Exam Review	Final-Exam Review
Friday, December 11, 2020	Reading days	
Monday, December 14, 2020		
Wednesday, December 16, 2020	Final Paper Due	
Friday, December 18, 2020	EXAM 7:30-9:30AM	

**GOOD LUCK ON YOUR EXAMS, FINAL PAPERS AND ENJOY THE HOLIDAYS!!!**